

Cure for a Joyless Life, Part 2 - Acts 26:17-18 – July 4th, 2010

- This is part two of a series titled; "The Cure for a Joyless Life." We ran out of time and only got to verse sixteen in our study last week.
- The Holy Spirit has directed my heart to this title because Paul is once again telling of his personal salvation experience here in our text.

- In my own seemingly insatiable quest to know the "why" behind the "what" of God's Word, I find myself asking Paul why he does this.
- In other words, why does the Holy Spirit have Luke record this one of many accounts of Paul's testimony of how he came to Christ?
- I believe the answer to this is simply this; it's because Paul's personal salvation experience was supreme in its importance.
- Now, at the risk of sounding like a little child who keeps asking why, why? Why was Paul's salvation experience of such importance?
- Because the "joy of his salvation" was the source of his tireless and endless strength to continue pressing on and fighting the good fight.

- Having said that, I need to say this; if we, I include myself, are in the religious rut of a joyless and powerless life, then this may be why.
- We've devalued the importance of our salvation and in so doing have lost both the joy of our salvation and the joy that is our strength.
- To me, this explains why it is and even how it is that the beloved Apostle was able to stand so strong in the face of such opposition.
- I suppose you could say that this study is sort of a "remember what it was like when you first were saved" kind of study.
- That's what Paul is doing, he's remembering the day of his salvation and telling Agrippa with the hopes that he will come to salvation.

- When Jesus had the Apostle John write the letter to the church of Ephesus in Revelation chapter two, He gave them a cure.
- The cure was for restoring that love they first had, and the joy they had since lost.
- He tells them to remember, repent, and repeat what worked at first when they were first saved.
- In other words, "if you don't feel like doing it, do it anyway then you'll feel like doing it."
- In other words, "the feelings will follow, if you don't follow your feelings. One might say; "well, I just don't feel like it!"
- OK, if you will do what you don't feel like doing, your feelings will return and you will feel like doing it."

1. Seeing the Light (Verses 12-13)

- Here Paul tells Agrippa about that day on the road to Damascus he saw the light which would ultimately change the course of his life.
- When in that dark time in those seasons of life, we would do well to remember that first time we saw the light Who is our eternal life.

2. Ceasing the struggle (Verse 14)

- Paul then recalls what Jesus said to him about how hard it was for Paul to kick against the goads by persecuting Jesus Himself.
- If you're life has become hard in this joyless and powerless state you're in, remember how hard your life was before you were saved.

3. Witnessing for Jesus (Verses 15-16)

- Paul tells Agrippa that Jesus told him to get up and stand on his feet because He's been appointed as a witness of what he's seen.
- Question; do you remember how often you told people about Jesus when you were first saved? Do you remember the joy as well?

4. Receiving God's forgiveness (Verses 17-18)

17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

- v17 The Lord tells Paul that he will be rescued from both the Jews and Gentiles because he's being sent to present the Gospel to them.
- v18a He then tells Paul that He wants to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.
- v18b He then goes on to say that this is so they may receive forgiveness of sins in their salvation and their subsequent sanctification.
- This wraps it all together and fills in all the blanks in that this is the key to our understanding of the role forgiveness plays in a joyful life.

Luke 7:36-50 36 Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, 38 and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. 39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner." 40 Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. 41 "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. 44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." 48 Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50 Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." NIV

- The common denominator between her and Paul was that they'd both been forgiven of much. She was a fornicator, he a murderer.
- I can't think of a more fitting way to now partake, as fellow sinners, of the Lord's Table, and in so doing remembering our salvation.

4th of July article by David Barton from ten years ago, back in the year 2000:

"This year marks 230 years since our Founding Fathers gave us our National Birth Certificate. We continue to be the longest on-going Constitutional Republic in the history of the world. Blessings such as these are not by chance or accidental. They are blessings of God. On July 2, 1776, Congress voted to approve a complete separation from Great Britain. Two days afterwards – July 4th – the early draft of the Declaration of Independence was signed, ...Four days later, on July 8, members of Congress took that document and read it aloud from the steps of Independence Hall, proclaiming it to the city of Philadelphia, after which the Liberty Bell was rung. The inscription around the top of that bell, Leviticus 25:10, was most appropriate for the occasion: "Proclaim liberty throughout the land and to all the inhabitants thereof." (David Barton goes on to write); ... John Adams said "The general principles on which the Fathers achieved independence were the general principles of Christianity." ... "It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty." John Adams believed that the Fourth of July should become a religious holiday – a day when we remembered God's hand in deliverance and a day of religious activities when we committed ourselves to Him in "solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. ...next to the birthday of the Savior of the world, your most joyous and most venerated festival returns on this day [the Fourth of July]?" An interesting question: why is it that in America the Fourth of July and Christmas were our two top holidays? Note [the] answer: "Is it not that, in the chain of human events, the birthday of the nation is indissolubly linked with the birthday of the Savior? That it forms a leading event in the progress of the Gospel dispensation? Is it not that the Declaration of Independence first organized the social compact on the foundation of the Redeemer's mission upon earth? That it laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity?" According to John Quincy Adams, Christmas and the Fourth of July were intrinsically connected. On the Fourth of July, the Founders simply took the precepts of Christ which came into the world through His birth (Christmas) and incorporated those principles into civil government.